

August 7/14, 2014, Notes on Trachtenberg's *A Constructed Peace*, as related to Dan's book, especially McNamara's Athens and Ann Arbor speeches, the question of Berlin and the Domsday Machine.

The construction of the Domsday Machine(s), begun under FDR and Truman, continued under Eisenhower, Kennedy and successive presidencies to varying degrees. But there are critical, though often subtle differences, which are important. Effectively, the New Look policy, giving primacy to the Air Force especially, goes back to the Truman Administration, notably during Lovett's tenure as Secretary of Defense from September 1951 on (succeeding Marshall), as reflected in particular in the last DOD budget under Truman for FY 1953 (see Samuel R. Williamson & Steven L. Rearden's *The Origins of U.S. Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1953* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993), especially 148-149. But of course, Lovett's tilt towards Air Power goes back to his participation in the Yale Naval Aviation Unit during World War I and his support for strategic bombing as Stimson's assistant during World War II (see Isaacson & Thomas, *The Wise Men*).

Eventually, under Eisenhower, the Massive Retaliation policy is enshrined, in MC 48. As David Alan Rosenberg says, during this period, Massive Retaliation effectively means Massive Preemption. That accounts, arguably, for much of what DE and others saw in the field in terms of the hair trigger mousetrap, ready to go at an instant. But already by the late Eisenhower period, elements of flexible response start working their way into the administration, though not so much with regard to the President himself; meaning that at the level of planning, the song remained largely the same. Also, during this period, there was effective delegation, not only to subordinate commanders and their commanders in turn, but also to America's Western European allies.

As Trachtenberg says, differences between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations were largely a matter of "degree" (see full quote below).

[289] "The real difference between the Kennedy and the Eisenhower strategy was one of degree. How far should the western side go—how far would the western side be able to go—before nuclear weapons would have to be used? How hard would the western side try to slow down the escalatory process? The whole thrust of the new thinking in 1961 was that the process needed to be drawn out in order to allow the terrible threat of nuclear escalation time to sink in. The aim, once the crisis had moved into its military phase, was "to produce non-nuclear combat, on a substantial scale, over as extended a period as possible. The Soviet political leadership needed to be forced to make a very serious decision, and "Allied interest appear to be best served by giving the Soviets both motive and opportunity for changing their course. To do this, the Allied objective must be the ability to prolong, not abbreviate, the non-nuclear phase." The goal was to avoid both nuclear war and a massive political defeat...."

"Military leaders disliked this kind of thinking, and Norstad was particularly critical." (see also p. 291)

Most importantly, and following some trends that were being considered at various levels under Eisenhower, the Kennedy administration wanted to include more lead time before a decision to use nuclear weapons in Europe, if that decision was to be made. This involved a number of things: **a)** centralizing control over nuclear policy, in the US and among European allies; **b)** this included PALs on nuclear weapons in Europe, reigning in effective delegation and ultimately **c)** the sacking of Norstad, who wanted autonomy in his role as SACUER and **d)** attempts to ensure, through centralized control and denigrating independent nuclear forces in France and England, the latter appearing to be, in particular, a swipe at West Germany's ambitions to acquire its own nuclear weapons. All these questions were entwined to varying extents and intimately related to the new strategy that McNamara announced in Athens and Ann Arbor in the Spring and Summer of 1961. Heightening centralized control also provided more US influence in the alliance, recurrent Berlin crises, and arguably minimized the dangers of neutralism. That being said, there were always problems – and bound to be – with the whole question of conventional and nuclear defenses of Western Europe, the US, and the NATO alliance, most especially regarding the question of West Berlin.

Athens and Ann Arbor could thus be seen, then, as a way to maintain more of a nuclear firebreak. This does not mean, however, that the Kennedy administration definitely ruled out the possibility of a preemptive first strike or first-use of nuclear weapons, or at least that President Kennedy did, though McNamara argues otherwise I believe. But there's a lot of evidence to indicate that Kennedy saw the logic in preemption and/or a first-strike, though his later behavior in the Cuban Missile Crisis – secret – also shows his flexibility, willingness to compromise, to make deals, but also to take calculated risks. Whether there were any realistic options to do this, even from the vantage point of planning, is another question, but from my reading this doesn't seem to have been a possibility during the Kennedy administration, or at least through Cuba II.

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STOP 63-

based on flexible response  
coercive strategy